

State Representative

JERRY KNOWLES

Serving the people of the 124th Legislative District



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Dear Neighbor

Earlier this year, I was sworn in for my first full term as your state representative. I am grateful to you for this opportunity and I am honored to continue serving you.

As the new legislative session begins, my colleagues must act quickly to resolve Pennsylvania's multi-billion dollar budget deficit, take steps to fix our lagging economy and create jobs, and, perhaps most importantly, restore Pennsylvanians' trust in their state government. In this newsletter, I will discuss some of the legislative initiatives I plan to introduce this session, including my bill to provide property tax relief to Pennsylvania's senior citizens and my bill aimed at helping local fire and emergency service units recruit and retain volunteers.

This newsletter also includes a survey concerning legislative issues and the services my district offices provide. I am very interested in your views on these issues. Please take a moment to complete the survey and return it to my office.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to serve you in Harrisburg and here at home. If I can ever be of assistance on a state-related matter, please do not hesitate to call one of my district offices. And be sure to visit my website RepKnowles.com for the latest information on state programs and issues.

Sincerely,

Jerry Knowles
State Representative
124th Legislative District

Knowles to Serve on State Government, Local Government, Gaming Oversight, and Commerce Panels

I am happy to be serving on the State Government, Local Government, Gaming Oversight, and Commerce committees during this legislative session.

Having served as a local government official for a number of years, I can offer a perspective that will be a valuable asset to the Local Government Committee. I believe the best government is closest to the people. That will be my guiding principle as a member of this committee.

During his inauguration address, Gov. Tom Corbett said there needs to be substantial legislative reform. I agree with him, and as a member of the State Government Committee, I will help review legislation to finally make those reforms a reality.

As a member of the Gaming Oversight Committee, I will help oversee Pennsylvania's growing casino industry. The casino industry is going to require close scrutiny as it continues to grow and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that it operates in the best interests of the people of the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania and the nation are still struggling through a difficult economic situation. As a member of the Commerce Committee, I will help develop policies to rehabilitate our economy and get Pennsylvanians working again.

Office Information

DISTRICT OFFICES

237 West Broad St./ Tamaqua, PA 18252
Phone: 570-668-1240 Fax: 570-952-3374

61 North Third St./ Hamburg, PA 19526-1501
Phone: 610-562-3411 Fax: 610-562-6895

988 East Main St./Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972
Phone: 570-385-8235 Toll-free: 855-271-9384

CAPITOL OFFICE

155B East Wing / P.O. Box 202124 / Harrisburg, PA 17120-2124
Phone: 717-787-9029 Fax: 717-260-6753

Attention Handicapped Residents



Please call the Tamaqua office at 570-668-1240 to arrange a meeting with Rep. Knowles or a member of his staff at the Tamaqua Borough Hall or to arrange a meeting.



Rep. Knowles and his wife, Lorraine, on the House floor following the swearing-in ceremony for the 2011-12 legislative session.

www.RepKnowles.com

124th Legislative District Survey

As your state representative, I value your views and I want to make sure I accurately represent those views in Harrisburg. With that in mind, I am asking that you complete this survey and return it to my district office at 237 West Broad Street, Tamaqua, PA 18252, at your earliest convenience. Please note that I have provided space for two members of your household to respond. If you prefer, you can complete this survey on my website, *RepKnowles.com*.

1. Pennsylvania is facing a multi-billion dollar budget shortfall. If we are going to maintain our fiscal solvency, we must act quickly to address the budget shortfall. In your opinion, what should the General Assembly do to resolve the shortfall?

- Cut state spending/Eliminate state programs
 Increase the personal income tax
 Increase the state sales tax

2. Pennsylvania's roads and bridges are in desperate need of repair. Given the budget shortfall, a funding source must be found to pay for these repairs. How do you think we should raise the needed revenue to undertake these repairs? Please check one.

- Increase the personal income tax
 Impose tolls on Pennsylvania's Interstate highways
 Cut mass transit funding and direct those funds to infrastructure repair
 Sell or enter into a long-term lease of the Pennsylvania Turnpike

3. This year, the Legislature is likely to consider a proposal to privatize the sale of wine and spirits under the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. Would you support such a proposal?

- Yes, Pennsylvania should not be in the business of selling liquor.
 No, the state liquor store system is an essential government function.

4. If you have contacted Rep. Knowles office with a question or concern about state government, how would you rate the service you received?

- Excellent
 Very Good
 Good
 Poor
 Very poor

5. Are you adequately served by my Tamaqua district office? If the answer is no, please provide me with ways in which my office can better serve your needs.

- Yes
 No



Bill Will Provide Property Tax Relief to Seniors

For years, we have heard talk about the need to provide property tax relief. Despite all the talk, Pennsylvanians are still waiting for that relief.

I believe our goal should be the reduction and eventual elimination of property taxes for every Pennsylvanian. But while we work toward that goal, something must be done to provide immediate relief to the Pennsylvanians who need it most: our senior citizens.

That is why I will be introducing legislation that will provide unprecedented property tax relief to some 600,000 Pennsylvania seniors by eliminating school property taxes for those seniors who make less than \$40,000 a year.

Pennsylvania's senior citizens have worked all of their lives to achieve the American dream of owning their own home. For many of them, rising property tax bills are turning that dream into a nightmare. My legislation will give them the relief they so desperately need.

Bill Will Help in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Emergency Personnel

Volunteers are the backbone of Pennsylvania's emergency services corps. The volunteer firefighters and emergency service personnel who protect our communities are our neighbors and our co-workers. They volunteer their time out of a sense of duty to the community and they deserve our thanks.

Unfortunately, our volunteer fire and EMS services have experienced a recent decline in the recruitment and retention of volunteers. I will be introducing legislation to help deal with that problem and make it easier for our volunteers to participate in necessary and timely training.

My legislation will:

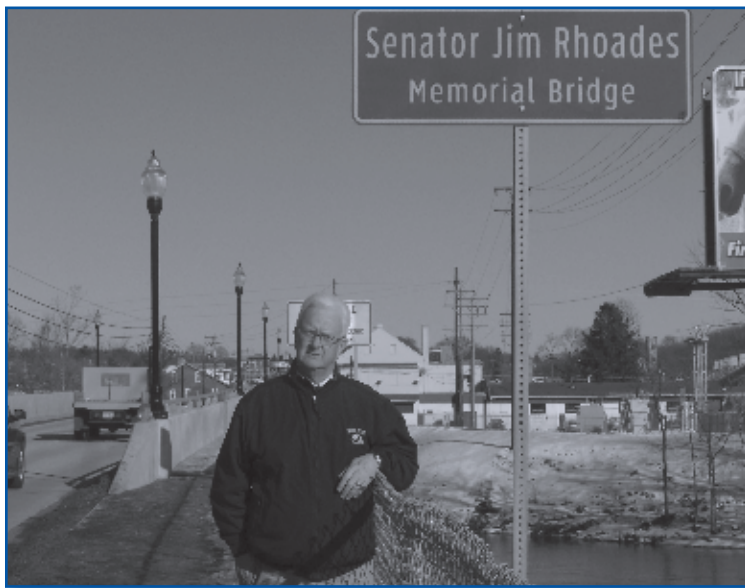
- Encourage private employers to permit an employee who is an active volunteer to leave work in response to an emergency call.
- Encourage private employers to permit an employee who is an active volunteer to take a paid leave of absence at the request of a fire chief to participate in bona fide training.
- Require the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions to permit employees who are active volunteers to respond to an emergency call prior to or during work hours, with or without pay, and without loss of time or efficiency rating.
- Prohibit all employers from discriminating against, refusing to hire or employ any individual due to their being a member of a volunteer emergency service organization.
- Authorize a tax credit for private employers who allow an employee-volunteer to leave work for training or to respond to an emergency call.

State Street Bridge Renamed in Honor of Sen. Jim Rhoades

A measure I sponsored to designate the State Street Bridge over the Schuylkill River in Hamburg Borough and Tilden Township, Berks County, as the Senator Jim Rhoades Memorial Bridge was signed into law in November 2010.

Many of us in this chamber knew Jim Rhoades well and considered him a friend. Education was his passion, and ultimately, he became chairman of the Senate Education Committee. As Education chairman, Jim had a hand in crafting every major education initiative in recent history, including the Pennsylvania Safe Schools Act, the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletics Accountability Act and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program.

His unexpected and untimely death was a tremendous shock and a terrible loss, not only to his friends and family, but also to the Commonwealth as a whole. I am proud to have sponsored the bill to dedicate this bridge in Jim's old district in his honor



Rep. Knowles stands next to the sign designating the State Street Bridge over the Schuylkill River in Hamburg Borough and Tilden Township as the Senator Jim Rhoades Memorial Bridge.

The 95th Annual Pennsylvania Farm Show was a Success

The largest indoor agricultural exhibition in the United States, the 95th Annual Pennsylvania Farm Show was held from Jan. 8 to Jan. 15 at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center in Harrisburg. The eight-day show featured 6,000 animals, 10,000 competitive exhibits and 290 commercial exhibitors, and the nearly half-million visitors to the show experienced the opportunity to learn of the new developments in Pennsylvania's leading industry, agriculture. I always enjoy attending the Farm Show and meeting with residents of the 124th District who take part in the various events. I am particularly impressed by the dedication and expertise of the many young people who exhibit livestock each year.



Rep. Knowles meets at the Pennsylvania Farm Show with Brent Stuffed and his parents, Brendle and Sara, of Bridge View Angus in Lenhartsville.

PACE and PACENET Provide Low-Cost Prescription Drug Assistance for Seniors

Senior citizens who rely on prescription drugs to stay healthy may qualify for financial assistance through the state's PACE and PACENET prescription drug assistance programs.

Eligibility restrictions for PACE require that applicants be residents of Pennsylvania for at least 90 consecutive days prior to application. Additionally, applicants must be age 65 or older and have a total income for the preceding calendar year of less than \$14,500 for a single person, or less than \$17,700 combined for a married couple.

Once enrolled in the PACE program, a benefit card will be mailed and enrollees will be required to pay a \$6 co-payment for each generic prescription medication. Brand name prescriptions require a \$9 co-payment. These co-payments are made to the pharmacy at the time of purchase.

PACENET members who enroll in a Medicare Part D plan will pay the Part D premium directly to the plan. Depending on the Part D plan one is enrolled in, monthly premiums will range between \$14.80 and \$28.45. In addition, Part D cardholders will pay no more than the PACENET co-payments of \$8 for each generic prescription medication and \$15 for each brand name to the pharmacy at the time of purchase.

PACENET members who do not enroll in a Part D plan will pay \$28.45 each month at the pharmacy toward the cost of their medications. If this is not paid on a monthly basis, it will accumulate. In addition, the individual will pay \$8 for each generic prescription medication and \$15 for each brand name.

Individuals who believe they qualify for PACE or PACENET can call either of my district offices at (570) 668-1240 or (610) 562-3411 for assistance with the application process.

Knowles Closes Orwigsburg Office, Will Share Space with Tobash

I have said repeatedly that state spending is out of control. As we look for ways for state government to save taxpayer money, I believe lawmakers should lead by example. With that in mind, I examined my district office operations and I discovered there were several ways I could make more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Since I opened my district office in Orwigsburg, the office has not seen a great deal of constituent traffic. As a result, I could not justify the expense of keeping the office open. Therefore, I have decided to close the Orwigsburg district office and share office space with Rep. Mike Tobash (R-Schuylkill/Berks) at 988 E. Main St. in Schuylkill Haven to provide constituent services to residents in that area of the 124th district.

“People have said they want us to reduce expenses where we can,” said Tobash. “We do not want to duplicate resources in close proximity, so this decision makes sense. While the office is not in Representative Knowles’ district, it is very close, so people in that part of the district can get to it relatively easily.”

I want to thank Rep. Tobash for allowing us to use space in his Schuylkill Haven office. By sharing space with him, we are saving money while keeping up the level of service residents in that area of our district have come to expect.

Because Schuylkill Haven is outside my district, I will pay no rent on the office. A part-time member of my staff will work out of Tobash's office at least two days a week. The only additional expense will be a phone line dedicated to calls for my office.



Rep. Knowles attends the grand opening of Rep. Mike Tobash's Schuylkill Haven office.

Knowles Office Holds Monthly Office Hours in Maiden Creek Township

Our area is growing rapidly and, as more residents come to our area, I want to be sure they are able to use the services my office can provide. In an effort to improve services and ensure that all areas of our district receive service, a member of my staff or I will hold office hours from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at the Maiden Creek Township Building, 1 Quarry Road in Blandon.

My staff and I will provide similar services to those provided in my other district offices including driver's licensing and vehicle registration renewals; Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications; PACE/PACENET applications; and referrals to state agencies and departments to resolve state-related matters.

Residents also can contact any of my district offices in Tamaqua at (570) 668-1240, or Hamburg at (610) 562-3411.



Rep. Knowles and his staff (from left): Wanda Zuber, Tracy Baker, Lauren Miller, and Linda Rice are here to serve you. (Not pictured): Martha Sterner.

What My Office Can Do For You:

Applications for:

- Birth certificates
- Children's Health Insurance Program
- PACE/PACENET
- Property Tax/Rent Rebates
- Pennsylvania income tax forms
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Car registration, special tags, titles, and license applications
- Complaints about state road conditions
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utilities Commission
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Fishing and hunting information

Tax Forms Available in My Office

Federal and Pennsylvania tax forms are now available in my district offices.

www.RepKnowles.com